UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General supports NATO decision on use of air power to deter Bosnian Serb attacks on Gorazde; delegates authority in respect of air strikes to UNPF Commander.

+ Security Council strongly condemns Bosnian Serb offensive against safe area of Zepa; demands Serbs withdraw from Zepa and Srebrenica.

+ UNPROFOR reports Bosnian Government has not formally surrendered Zepa; sends 60-strong team to assist in evacuation of civilians.

+ Secretary-General condemns bomb attack against Paris Metro station and conveys condolences to French people.

+ UNHCR issues revised appeal for $263 million to assist refugees and returnees in Africa's Great Lakes Region in 1995.

+ Voter identification resumes in Western Sahara after Deputy Special Representative meets with Moroccan Government and POLISARIO.

+ United Kingdom Permanent Representative says United Nations has moved to centre of world stage in last five years; notes numerous successes in peace-keeping and social fields.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has expressed full support for the decision taken last night by the North Atlantic Council regarding the use of air power to deter Bosnian Serb attacks on Gorazde. In a statement issued today, he said he agreed with NATO's conclusion that an attack on Gorazde should be met by a firm and decisive response, including through air strikes.

In order to streamline decision-taking within the United Nations chain of command, the Secretary-General today delegated authority in respect of NATO

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air strikes, which he had hitherto retained himself, to the Commander of United Nations Peace Forces (UNPF), General Bernard Janvier. Meanwhile, Special Representative Yasushi Akashi delegated the necessary authority in respect of close air support, which is the use of air power to defend United Nations personnel. General Janvier was authorized to delegate that authority further to the Force Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) when operational circumstances so required.

The Secretary-General expressed deep concern at current attacks on Sarajevo and the Bihac pocket, and noted that the North Atlantic Council had asked the NATO Military Authorities, in consultation with the UNPF, to formulate proposals on the possible use of air power in those situations also. In furtherance of cooperation between the two Organizations, he instructed Under-Secretary-General for Peace-keeping Operations Kofi Annan and General Janvier to travel to Brussels for consultations with NATO on the operational modalities for implementing the North Atlantic Council's decision.

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The Security Council last night restated in the strongest possible terms its condemnation of the Bosnian Serb offensive against the safe area of Zepa. In a statement by its President, Delmer Urbizo Panting (Honduras), the Council demanded that the Bosnian Serbs withdraw from both Zepa and Srebrenica.

The Council expressed support for the efforts of UNPROFOR and international humanitarian agencies to achieve the safe evacuations of civilians wishing to leave Zepa. It demanded that UNPROFOR and those agencies be given immediate and unhindered access to the population of the area. In particular, the Council demanded unhindered access for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), so that it could register and visit detainees.

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The Bosnian Government has still not formally surrendered Zepa today, and retains military control of part of the enclave, according to a United Nations spokesman. However, the Government has asked UNPROFOR to assist in the evacuation of civilians to central Bosnia and Herzegovina. Over 1,100 women, children and elderly persons have reached Government-controlled territory, and thousands more may require transport to join them. A 60-strong UNPROFOR team today left Sarajevo for Zepa to assist in the evacuation effort.

Meanwhile, European Union mediator Carl Bildt today attended a Contact Group meeting in London. Participants discussed Mr. Bildt's talks with

Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic on the possible recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) in exchange for some sanctions relief.

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The Secretary-General expressed deep shock at news of yesterday's bomb attack in the Paris Metro, which killed at least seven people. He condemned such acts of indiscriminate violence in the strongest terms and presented his condolences to the French people.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has issued a revised appeal for $263 million on behalf of the Great Lakes Region of Africa. The agency reduced the 1995 appeal from $292 million, having received only 40 per cent of that figure by mid-year. Of the $130 million in available funds, it has already spent almost $121 million.

UNHCR's programmes in the Region are aimed at more than 2 million refugees from Rwanda and Burundi and some 150,000 returnees. Most of the refugees are living in sprawling camps in Zaire and Tanzania. Others are in smaller camps in Burundi and Uganda.

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The Moroccan Government and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO) today resumed the voter identification process for the referendum in Western Sahara at six centres, according to a United Nations spokesman. The resumption was made possible after Deputy Special Representative Erik Jensen met with the two sides in Rabat and Tindouf last week. The process was suspended one month ago after more than 45,000 voters had been identified.

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The United Nations has moved to the centre of the world stage in the last five years and has had many successes in maintaining peace and security, United Kingdom Permanent Representative Sir David Hannay said today. He told correspondents at Headquarters that much of the criticism of the Organization was facile. While it was going through a difficult patch, the number of problems that had to be addressed at the international level was increasing, not decreasing. He noted that one third of all the resolutions adopted in the last fifty years had been adopted since 1990.

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Speaking on the eve of his retirement, Sir David highlighted the Organization's role in reversing Iraq's aggression against Kuwait and in the follow-up to the Gulf War. At no time in this century had aggression been reversed at such low cost in terms of human and material loss. However, the "heavy shade" of Bosnia and Herzegovina had made some people forget that achievement. There had been other important successes over the past five years, including the peace-keeping operations in Cambodia, Mozambique and El Salvador. Lives had been saved, elections held and human rights protected.

Sir David also called attention to "non-Council" successes: the 1990 Children's Summit, which pushed many countries to pay more attention to children's rights; the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development, which set the international community on the road to environmental protection; the 1994 Conference on Population and Development, which addressed an enormously sensitive but very important problem; and the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. However, the Organization should be more sparing in the use of summits, or "the currency gets devalued".

The United Nations Operation in Somalia had ultimately been a failure, but one from which useful lessons could be drawn, he continued. The Rwandan tragedy was "a blot on all our lives", but the Organization had received a lot of unwarranted blame for it. The Bosnian crisis was enormously complex, but many United Nations objectives had been attained: the conflict had been contained geographically; humanitarian supplies had been delivered to millions of people; and the peace process had been sustained. He stressed the importance of United Nations reform, particularly in the areas of finance and management, concluding that the Organization must "adapt or perish".

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